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Most martial arts focus on teaching tools and techniques instead of developing the skills and attributes that would make them work. Guided Chaos asserts that martial arts training methodologies should focus on learning and practicing principles and exercises that help one become a master of motion, randomness, spontaneity, improvisation, and change as opposed to mastering choreographed sportive techniques. Principles of movement include any and everything within the laws of physics, to include balance, ballistics, body unity, inertia, momentum, speed, weight, looseness and sensitivity of the human body in mortal combat.

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Command and Staff College  
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2076 South Street  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command  
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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**TITLE:**

THE MARINE CORPS MARTIAL ARTS PROGRAM: THE WARRIOR MINDSET OF A  
MARTIAL CULTURE

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program: The warrior mindset of a martial culture

**Author:** Major Alan Ray Singleton II, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** MCMAP was originally designed as a close combat program to combine combat instruction, core values and the development of a martial arts mindset. However, due to the over emphasis on sportive and grappling techniques, the “lethal” aspect of the program has become convoluted, misdirected, and ineffective except under so-called sportive or competitive (i.e. unrealistic) conditions. The thesis will provide a discussion of the value of MCMAP in relationship to a “warrior mindset,” provide background, and then suggestions for change and improvement in the program.

**Discussion:** In 1999, United States Marine Corps Commandant, General James L. Jones, initiated a vision of a Marine Corps Martial Art. MCMAP combines weapons based combat skills, combat conditioning and Core Values. MCMAP is the first Marine Corps close combat program to combine combat instruction, core values and the development of a martial arts mindset. The successful implementation of this program was meant to enhance the personal development of each Marine in a team framework. Designed to enhance unit cohesion, esprit de corps, and combat effectiveness, it has helped to lessen the negative human dimension factors and environmental challenges of combat. A Marine warrior is an individual whose strength of character and mental discipline rivals his strength of arms. The difference that this program brings to the Marine Corps is it develops Marines as principled warriors to be aggressive in

combat and imbued with the ability to deal with the moral dimensions of war and ethical decisions of life.

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program fuses the physical disciplines of combat with the leadership and core values training that are the hallmark of the Corps. This synergy of training creates a warrior who embodies all that is best in Country and Corps, a United States Marine.

MCMAP was originally designed as close combat program to combine combat instruction, core values and the development of a martial arts mindset. The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program evolved into its present day form by combining the best combat-tested martial arts skills, time-honored Close Combat training techniques, with proven Marine Corps Core Values and Leadership training. However, the over emphasis on sportive and grappling techniques, the “lethal” aspect of the program has become convoluted, misdirected, and ineffective except under so-called sportive or competitive (i.e. unrealistic) conditions.

Sustainment training of a Marine’s mental and character disciplines must be balanced proportional to the physical discipline. That balance of disciplines is necessary to mitigate the strong inclination to act emotionally due to the influx of hormones and changes to a Marines physiological systems when he encounters combat stress. Despite the recognition that sustainment training across all disciplines is a contributing factor in the development of a Marine’s warrior mindset, MCMAP continues to teach sportive techniques which are not effective when Marines are confronted with “lethal” threats in close combat scenarios.

The martial art known as Guided Chaos will be discussed as an alternate view on training modalities effective in confronting “lethal” threats and the development of a warrior mindset. The principles and training modality of Guided Chaos is a unique martial arts example

to achieve the warrior mindset of “lethality” currently lacking in MCMAP. Guided Chaos has no forms or set techniques, no prearranged specific responses to a given number of specific attacks and no learn-by-the-numbers choreography that would potentially clog the mind and the reflexes with unnecessary strategic calculations.

Most martial arts focus on teaching tools and techniques instead of developing the skills and attributes that would make them work. Guided Chaos adopts a training modality that develops lethal fighting skills and attributes within the body one already has. The principles of Guided Chaos include balance (equilibrium control), looseness (or pliability), sensitivity (kinesthetic touch) and spatial (hand-eye, sub-cortical vision), body unity (proprioception) and spontaneity (anything goes or adaptability). By focusing on principles in their proper context versus a specific technique, they eventually lead to total freedom of action and creativity. Through the development of the principles, one is able to adapt to any situation. Structured techniques place limitations on movement, making the techniques unsuitable in an environment where the movement dynamics are virtually limitless.

**Conclusion:** No one will argue against continuing to develop a Marines’ mental and character attributes to make them a more proficient war fighter. Free sparring develops and enhances combative performance by introducing Marines to interpersonal violence. In addition, the Marine Corps must remember to maintain the proper mental and character focus when training. The Marine Corps must also guard against “play fighting” or sports fighting technique-training methodologies. When the time comes to kill, the Marine Corps must make sure it does not have too large of a gap to cross between the training and the forensic reality of the actual engagement.

Guided Chaos asserts that martial arts training methodologies should focus on learning and practicing principles and exercises that help one become a master of motion, randomness, spontaneity, improvisation, and change as opposed to mastering choreographed sportive techniques. Principles of movement include any and everything within the laws of physics, to include balance, ballistics, body unity, inertia, momentum, speed, weight, looseness and sensitivity of the human body in mortal combat.

## Preface

As a Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) practitioner for over 10 years and a MCMAP black belt instructor for over eight years, I have had sufficient opportunities to train and apply many of the MCMAP techniques in both combat and garrison environments. I have observed that there is a lack of sustainment necessary to master all disciplines of MCMAP. Specifically, there is an over emphasis on the physical discipline/combat conditioning, which creates a void in the equal and balanced attention that should be given to the mental and character disciplines of MCMAP.

I have observed an inordinate amount of injuries because of the current MCMAP training. This is primarily due to the commander's reluctance at all levels to enforce MCMAP participation, because of operational tempo and the high injury rates of those who consistently participate in MCMAP. In my assessment, many of these injuries could have been avoided, if there was a more balanced approach by the instructors facilitating the training. When more focus is placed on the combat conditioning component of the physical discipline, I have noticed an increase in injuries across the spectrum of MCMAP participants, particularly in the lower tan and grey belt syllabus.

Lastly, I will discuss the current combat mindset of Marines today and what MCMAP is currently doing right but also what we are doing wrong. As a martial arts practitioner of more than just MCMAP, I will discuss some of my experiences in another martial art known as Ki Chuan Do, also known as Guided Chaos, which offers viable alternative approaches to

developing a combat mindset more akin to what General Jones envisioned for MCMAP and the martial culture of the United States Marine Corps.

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### **Introduction**

The value of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) is to create and sustain warriors, who make the right decisions and use the appropriate level force necessary based on the situation. These warriors must be physically capable, mentally astute, and ethically discerning in order to make the right decisions in concert with the ever changing situations of today's

operational theater. The synchronization of the physical, mental and character disciplines of MCMAP is the best current solution to achieve the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) intent of a martial culture and success in the challenging operational environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. A martial culture, that fosters holistic warriors, who possess the unwavering maturity, judgment, and the strength of character necessary to face the complexities of modern day warfare. <sup>1</sup>

There are some road blocks in the way for the USMC to achieve that desired intent. Notably, the training modality of sportive or competitive fighting techniques is not realistic and does not prepare warriors for the forensic realities of combat when the enemy demonstrates a lethal threat. The thesis will provide a discussion of the value of MCMAP in relationship to a “warrior mindset,” provide background, and then suggestions for change and improvement in the program.

In 1999, United States Marine Corps Commandant, General James L. Jones, initiated a vision of a Marine Corps Martial Art. MCMAP combines weapons based combat skills, combat conditioning and Core Values. MCMAP is the first Marine Corps close combat program to combine combat instruction, core values and the development of a martial arts mindset.

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program is part of General Jones’ vision of a cultural transformation, a “re-kindling of the old Corps’ warrior spirit.” <sup>2</sup> It is more than just another hand to hand fighting form. MCMAP emphasizes the synergy of character development, physical fitness, and mental development with an emphasis on weapons’ based combat. The development of character discipline focuses on leadership, ethics, values, principles, honor, courage and commitment. Physical development integrates hand to hand combat fighting skills,

weapons training and combat physical fitness. Marines study the art of war through historical examples of martial cultures such as the Spartans, Apaches and Marine Raiders, to instill a combat mindset. These traits and skills are equally valuable for all Marines, regardless of Military Occupational Specialty (MOS).

The Marine Corps Martial Arts program keeps the Marine in touch with those things that brought him into the Corps initially and develops those “Marine” skills and values that are advertised in recruiting commercials and posters. “In the past our successful recruiting campaign has focused on the intangibles of being a Marine. The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program capitalizes upon and develops these intangibles, providing the potential Marine with a powerful example that a Marine embodies the lifestyle they seek. As for retention, this program will rekindle the passion of Marines currently on active duty by fulfilling the need that brought them into the Marine Corps in the first place”<sup>3</sup>

The Marine Corps Martial Arts program is an evolutionary program building upon the rich traditions and proven ethos of the United States Marine Corps. The Commandant recognized that with the changing nature of modern warfare, as well as changes in today’s society, there was a need for a program that would tie together all that is good in the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps battlefield prowess is legendary, to include history of developing leaders, which is unparalleled; and Americans have always identified a Marine as a person of the highest character. This program takes the best of the United States Marine Corps past, with the innovation of the future and blends them into a seamless training system. The successful implementation of this program was meant to enhance the personal development of each Marine in a team framework. Designed to enhance unit cohesion, esprit de corps, and combat

effectiveness, this program has helped to lessen the negative human dimension factors and environmental challenges of combat. Further MCMAP is designed to re-energize all Marines about their profession while increasing readiness and instilling a warrior ethos.

The Marine Corps makes Marines who are capable of winning the nation's battles. To do this, it is necessary that Marines know how to fight. The present day warrior must have principles and the discretion necessary to discern when to escalate the appropriate degree of force based on the situation. A Marine warrior is an individual whose strength of character and mental discipline rivals his strength of arms. The difference that this program brings to the Marine Corps is the development of Marines as principled warriors who are aggressive in combat and are imbued with the ability to deal with the moral dimensions of war and ethical decisions of life.

While borrowing specific techniques from various established martial arts, MCMAP has many techniques that are unique. The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program is rooted in the credo that every Marine is a rifleman capable of engaging the enemy anywhere from 500 meters to 500 millimeters. The doctrine of this program has been refined in the crucible of combat through the experiences of combat veterans, and is guided by the input of several Subject Matter Experts. It is a weapons based system unique unto itself because it is based upon weapon systems, combat equipment, physical challenges and tactics not found outside the combat environment.<sup>4</sup>

It has been said that there are two powers in the world, the sword and the spirit. In the long run, the sword is always defeated by the spirit. The spirit of the Marine warrior will always guide and control the power of his sword. Thus in addition to the physical disciplines associated with other martial arts, this program places an equal emphasis on training in the mental and

character disciplines. The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program fuses the physical disciplines of combat with the leadership and core values training that are the hallmark of the Corps. This synergy of training will create a warrior who will embody all that is best in our Country and Corps, a United States Marine.<sup>5</sup>

There are some roadblocks in the way to achieve that desired intent. Notably, the training modality of sportive and competitive fighting techniques is not realistic nor does it prepare warriors for the forensic realities of combat when the enemy demonstrates a lethal threat. The illustration below depicts a prime example of the aforementioned dynamic.

On 18 June 2010, Combined Anti-Armor Team (CAAT) White Bravo was screening in the Musa Qal'eh Wadi when it came under intense and accurate machine gun fire. After the vehicles returned fire, dismounts were pushed out to close with the enemy. Once the dismounts moved away from the vehicles, the company began receiving indications and warnings that the enemy was preparing an ambush for the dismounted squad. Corporal Clifford Wooldridge took his fire team and pushed around the suspected enemy flank. During the movement, the fire team received fire from a tree line 100 meters away. Corporal Wooldridge directed his Marines to return fire and close on the tree line. Upon arriving at the tree line, Corporal Wooldridge's Marines noticed approximately 15 enemy fighters carrying machine guns, Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG) and rifles. The fighters were gathering in preparation to ambush the other portion of the dismounted squad. Corporal Wooldridge emplaced his Marines and proceeded to engage the enemy fighters. During the engagement, Corporal Wooldridge and his Marines killed five enemy fighters, wounded three, and forced the others to break contact and run away behind the compound.<sup>6</sup>

Corporal Wooldridge picked up flank security, while his Marines held observation on the downed enemy fighters. While on flank security, Corporal Wooldridge heard voices around the corner of an adjacent wall. Corporal Wooldridge then pushed around the corner and saw two enemy fighters moving into an ambush position less than 25 meters away. He immediately engaged with two bursts from his M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon, killing both fighters. As he began to re-load his weapon, he noticed the barrel of a medium machine gun appear around the corner of a wall less than five feet away from him. Corporal Wooldridge knew his weapon was out of ammunition and quickly grabbed the barrel of the enemy's weapon, threw the fighter to the ground, and became engaged in hand to hand combat. During the fighting, Corporal Wooldridge made multiple attempts to subdue the fighter. When the fighter attempted to grab one of his hand grenades, Corporal Wooldridge grabbed the enemy's machine gun, butt stroked the fighter and killed him instantly. Corporal Wooldridge's bravery and aggression saved the lives of his fellow Marines by forcing the enemy to withdraw from the ambush and dealt the enemy a tremendous defeat.<sup>7</sup>

Notice that it was only after Corporal Wooldridge's attempt to subdue the enemy and the enemy made a move that the Corporal clearly understood was life and death, did Corporal Wooldridge then do what he could have done from the start and that is deliver a killing blow to the enemy. This highlights the point that grappling does not work when people want to kill you. This is a good illustration of the assertion that the "subdue" mentality was not appropriate in this situation and could have cost Corporal Wooldridge his life.

Lieutenant Colonel Albert Ridenhour, who is a 6<sup>th</sup> degree master in Guided Chaos and a Marine Corps Marital Arts (MCMAP) practitioner, asserts that this is a prime example of the

lack of proper warrior mindset development in MCMAP. “We should focus purely on killing blows and techniques along with the proper warrior mindset development and leave the controlling stuff out until the higher levels of MCMAP when Marines have some killing skill first. And we should definitely stay away from the grappling nonsense.”<sup>8</sup>

Granted, some missions require Marines to detain people with basic arm-control techniques, but such skills should be taught only after Marines learn how to kill the enemy. It should also be noted that sportive throwing and grappling techniques require tremendous physical ability in order to make them work – highly impractical for the battlefield when you are wrapped in 71 pounds [31.75 kg] of battle gear.<sup>9</sup>

This hand-to-hand training has become convoluted, misdirected, and ineffective except under so-called sportive or competitive (i.e. unrealistic) conditions. The U.S. Marine Corps teaches morality and ethics, with respect to how to treat others, has ultimately been based on how to “perceive” the threat. The perception of German and Japanese threat to the United States in WWI and WWII respectively, formulated the political impetus behind how the military was trained. Specifically, in this case the focus on the killing aspects of hand to hand combat was reflected in the training modalities during World War II. In the modern operational environment, the perception of the insurgency threat does not equate to the trained killer modalities of the past.

The Russians instituted a hand-to-hand combat methodology in 1989 that far surpassed the USMC methodology in terms of simplicity and effectiveness. Ironically, it was nearly identical to the system the U.S. military used in World War II. In addition, several years ago in Manchester, England, an alleged Al Qaeda training manual was recovered that was used in

several terrorist trials. It taught exactly the kinds of killing techniques that the United States military used to teach.<sup>10</sup>

Sport fighting proponents within the military services have come to believe that sportive techniques are suitable for the battlefield when, in fact, they are grappling, and restraining maneuvers that Marines are supposed to use against an enemy trying to kill them.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, some fear that if the simple deadly tactics employed in World War II were resurrected, the Marines would be prone to use them against civilians – or on each other.

However, this theory is highly unlikely when one takes into consideration that Marines are taught to fire rifles and pistols all the time, and yet there is no direct correlation with Marines going to a local pawnshop, buying guns, and sniping at people from the bell tower. Hence, these fears about using fighting tactics are unfounded. Ultimately Marines, who are wearing an average of 71 pounds of gear, are being expected to go to the ground and grapple with people who are trying to kill them, and then to do what? Control the attackers with a lock?”<sup>12</sup> As illustrated in the excerpt above, Corporal Clifford Wooldridge tried to do just that. He initially tried to subdue the enemy with a lock, even though the enemy was actively trying to kill him.

The thesis contends that MCMAP was originally designed as close combat program to combine combat instruction, core values and the development of a martial arts mindset; however, due to the over emphasis on sportive and grappling techniques, the “lethal” aspect of the program has become convoluted, misdirected, and ineffective except under so-called sportive or competitive (i.e. unrealistic) conditions. The next sections will describe the development of MCMAP, the program’s structure and value to the Marines, current challenges, opportunities,

and finally, suggestions as to how to improve the program to meet the current strategic environment.

### **Development of the Martial Arts Program for the USMC**

First, it should be noted is that MCMAP, as the Marine Corps' current training system, is the product of many decades of evolution. Marines learned there are often many competing interests and resources, which cause their programs to unintentionally evolve into something other than intended. Regardless of this dynamic, it is essential that Marines train to a standard that allows the warfighter to meet and defeat the enemy across the entire spectrum of conflict in the current operating environment. The goal of MCMAP was to create "a conglomerate system that incorporates the full spectrum of violence, from non-lethal to lethal to meet the three block war theory."<sup>13</sup> MCMAP can trace its roots to the pre-World War I era, when Marines were trained in the effective use of the bayonet and hand-to-hand techniques. Fencing, boxing and wrestling were some of the close combat techniques used to foster the warrior spirit. Marines stationed in China took away with them Asian influences in the form of martial arts. The World War II period continued the tradition of close combat training and was shaped somewhat by the Asian martial arts of Karate and Jujitsu.<sup>14</sup>

During the interwar years leading up to World War II, individuals and units developed specialized training based upon the experiences of Marines from World War I. This included exposure of Marines to Eastern Asian martial arts systems such as Judo and Karate. Marines employed these various systems such as Combat Hitting Skills, the O'Neil System and those of the Marines Raiders during the island hopping campaigns. Additionally, the rapid expansion of the Marine Corps saw a refinement of character and leadership development programs.

In World War II, the United States military's entire hand-to-hand combat training was revamped with the prospect of confronting Japanese soldiers skilled in Judo and Karate. This revamping resulted in a highly simplified system of strikes and strategies designed to do one thing: kill the enemy. This trend continued after World War II through the post-Vietnam war period, during which time, Marines tested and refined new techniques. Marines adapted to the technologies and the innovation of a new generation of Marines. During the 1970's and 1980's in response to changes in society after Vietnam, focus was placed on professional military education and structured leadership training. The 1980's saw the development of the Linear Infighting Neural Override Engagement (LINE) system. The LINE system, developed in response to a perceived need for a standardized close combat system, was an important step in the evolution of a Marine Corps specific martial arts program. However, the LINE program was not successful beyond entry level training because it was never practiced at the unit level. Lieutenant Colonel Bristol, Director of the MACE, pointed out that "The Corps as a whole has never been able to piece together the other aspects of training. It has always remained just out of the mainstream; practiced with zeal in entry level training and a by few stalwarts, but ignored by the Corps as a whole."<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the LINE program was very limited in response to the full spectrum of combat and escalation of force, as all techniques ended with a killing stomp to the head. Another shortcoming of the LINE program was the absence of core values and leadership training integration.

In 1996, the Marine Corps Close Combat program emerged after an overhaul of the LINE system. Combat hitting skills, pugil stick training and lessons learned from past programs were combined with the input of ten (10) subject matter experts (SME's) from numerous martial arts

disciplines to develop the Marine Corps Close Combat Program. This was concurrent with the introduction of a formalized training program designed to renew emphasis on core values. The attempt in 1996 to install a Marine Corps Core Values program met results similar to the LINE program.<sup>16</sup>

Upon becoming Commandant of the Marine Corps in June 1999, General James L. Jones detailed his vision of a Marine Corps Martial Arts Program. With the Commandant's guidance, the Close Combat program, as well as available programs outside the Marines Corps, underwent a period of testing and review. From this review, testing, and evaluation birthed the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program. The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program evolved into its present day form by combining the best combat-tested martial arts skills, time-honored Close Combat training techniques, with proven Marine Corps Core Values and Leadership training.<sup>17</sup>

### **Marine Corps Martial Arts Program Structure**

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program consists of a belt ranking system with 5 basic levels; Tan, Gray, Green, Brown and Black belt. The colored belt levels are identified as "user" levels and are pursued for the individual Marine's edification. By pursuing them, the user becomes a stronger link in the Marine Corps chain. In addition to the belt levels of MCMAP, there are two instructional levels as well, each with clearly delineated responsibilities. The Instructor develops users at the small unit level, and is only responsible for teaching up to the belt level he attains, but cannot test the same level which he attains. The instructor teaches the physical techniques, which are the building blocks of the physical discipline, and develops the small unit with character and mental training, which positively influences the unit's cohesion, *esprit de corps*, and readiness.<sup>18</sup>

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program consists of three components; mental discipline, character discipline, and physical discipline. The disciplines are divided into blocks and presented systematically to Marines at each belt level. Those disciplines taught at lower belt levels are reviewed and reinforced during follow-on training and at the next belt level. Many skills specific to one discipline reinforce the strengths of the other disciplines, resulting in a synergistic effect. Hence, the program as a whole is stronger than its individual parts. The martial culture studies strengthen the mental character of Marines through the historical study of war, at the same time reinforcing the importance of character to a warrior and a martial society.<sup>19</sup>

The mental discipline has two main components, war fighting and professional military education (PME). This encompasses the study of the art of war, the professional reading program, Marine Corps Common Skills Training (MBST), decision making training, the historical study of war, the tactics and techniques of maneuver warfare, risk management assessment, force protection; and the study of Marine Corps history, customs, courtesies and traditions. The mental discipline develops a smarter Marine, capable of understanding and handling the complexity of modern warfare, and ultimately a Marine who is tactically, technically proficient, and is capable of decision making under any condition from combat to liberty. This training begins with the transformation of recruit training servicing as the foundation of the “strategic corporal” and the future leadership of the Corps. For an MAI/MAIT mental discipline is also taught through Warrior Studies, Martial Cultures, and Tie-ins.<sup>20</sup>

The character discipline has two main components: the Marine Corps Core Values program and the Marine Corps Leadership Program. The components both encompass Troop Information training as well as the study of the human dimensions of combat, which are designed to instill the

Marine Corps Ethos into every Marine. Character discipline is the spiritual aspect of each Marine and the collective spirit of the Corps. The components of character discipline instill the warrior spirit and emphasize the best of United States Marine Corps traditions for developing esprit de corps, camaraderie and a warrior mindset. Character discipline development ultimately creates a Marine who is a warrior-defender, who embodies core values, and is self-disciplined, confident, and capable of making the right decision under any condition from combat to liberty. For an MAI/MAIT, character discipline is also taught through Warrior Studies, Martial Cultures, and Tie-ins.<sup>21</sup>

The physical discipline consists of three main components; fighting techniques combat conditioning and combat sports. The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program is a weapon based system beginning at assault fire and moving to the four elements of the fighting component; rifle and bayonet, edged weapons, weapons of opportunity, and unarmed combat; with unarmed combat having a role across the entire spectrum of combat. The various armed and unarmed combat techniques are combined as part of the Marine Corps Physical Fitness Program to produce the combat conditioning component. Every Marine must be prepared to execute; to seek out, close with and destroy the enemy by fire and movement or repel his assault by fire and close combat. Fighting the three-block war ensures success during the final 300 meters of combat. Battlefield oriented, combat equipment develops in Marines the ability to overcome physical hardship, physical obstacles under any climatic condition and is designed with the philosophy that there are no time limits, level playing fields, or second chances in combat. By developing physical toughness that translates into mental toughness, fighting techniques produce a Marine who possesses combat fitness and the ability to handle any situation that confronts him. The

combat sports program is designed to enhance unit cohesion and esprit de corps, reinforce competition and confidence, while practicing proven techniques.<sup>22</sup>

MCMAP is a synergy of all three disciplines, which are inextricably linked to each other. In order to advance within the belt ranking system, commanders are required to certify that the Marine meets annual training requirements, the prerequisites of each specific belt level, and possess the maturity, judgment and moral character required by their recommendation. This process ensures that each Marine has developed the physical skills necessary to make him a lethal warrior and has developed a commensurate level of maturity and self-discipline.<sup>23</sup>

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, that borrows specific techniques from established martial arts, is a unique weapon based system. This program places an equal emphasis on training in the mental and character disciplines, as well as the physical disciplines of traditional martial arts. The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program fuses together the physical disciplines of combat, leadership and core values training and this synergy creates a warrior who will embody all that is best of Country and Corps, a United States Marine.<sup>24</sup>

### **Warrior Mindset Development and Challenges**

There are many warrior case studies and writings that illustrate various combat experiences. An examination of these experiences is a great place to begin to understand the psychology of warfare on those who are called upon to kill, in service to their country or otherwise. From these studies, the Marine Corps can begin to understand the process of developing the “lethal” aspect of a warrior mindset, also known as a “combat mindset.”

Legendary Marine Corps Sniper, Carlos Hathcock, felt that “the human target always stimulates interest.” The question arises, is this a natural feeling to have, or one that developed

through years of training, hunting, stalking, and actually pulling the trigger with another human being in his cross-hairs? Dr. Michael Ghiglieri, a former combat soldier and longtime primate researcher, feels that killing is imprinted on our DNA and impossible to escape and asks in his writings, “Are we killing animals self-organized into the disciplinary structures of civilization?” Whether one agrees or not that killing is part of our DNA, one would have to agree with William Blake when he observed that, “History is a bath of blood.” Hence, it behooves one to understand the mechanisms that affect our combative behavior. Understanding these mechanisms will give us insight into the physiological and emotional factors that contribute to the United States Marine Corps combat mindset.<sup>25</sup>

The first mechanism is the fight or flight response. For a large percentage of the population, the initial natural response is to flee a combative situation. However, that initial flight response could quickly change to fight, if the combative situation threatened a loved one, in which one would be provoked to do whatever necessary to remove the threat. A protective element comes into play when there is somebody other than ourselves at risk.<sup>26</sup>

The United States Marine Corps can incorporate the two points of flight or fight into training by training the fight response into those individuals who do not already have it. Immediate Action Drills (IA Drills) are an example of this training. IA Drills teach Marines that during an ambush. Although it might seem counter intuitive to turn into the assault with fire and maneuver, experience shows from the study of war history it is the best course of action to seize the initiative from our enemies.<sup>27</sup>

The United States Marine Corps combat mindset is greatly influenced by predatory and affective behavior. Predatory behavior is usually associated with stalking behavior, in which the

predator experiences very little autonomic arousal and is extremely focused on his prey, waiting to exploit the best opportunity. This is an advanced behavioral mechanism, yet hard to achieve for combatants because it requires a balance of physiological control, mental discernment and the ethical temperament to separate ones natural emotional responses from what is the right thing to do from an ethical standpoint.

Affective behavior includes both overt physical and vocal displays. The subject partaking in affective behavior experiences an elevation in arousal levels, adrenaline courses through his body, he begins to sweat, his heart rate increases, and his breathing increases as his need for oxygen increases. Affective behavior is difficult to sustain and is a very ineffective state to be in for a combative engagement. It is important to note here that the sustainment training of a Marine's mental and character disciplines must be balanced proportion to the physical. The balance of disciplines is necessary to mitigate the strong inclination to act emotionally due to the influx of hormones and changes to our physiological systems when we encounter combat stress.<sup>28</sup>

The last mechanism worth mentioning is pseudo-predatory behavior. Humans have many coping mechanisms to facilitate killing, to include depersonalizing their foe, creating derogatory names for their foe, and finding ways to make the foe "less than human." These mechanisms make it easier on the human psyche because the killing a "lower life form", is something that one's conscience can resolve.<sup>29</sup>

The following illustration is a prime example of how pseudo-predatory behavior can lead to ethically incorrect actions when combatants do not receive the right balance of character discipline training. Recently a video surfaced on YouTube showing four U.S. Marine Corps Snipers

urinating on the heads of three Afghan deceased, joking among themselves as they desecrated the corpses. The act of Marines urinating on their victims violates the Geneva Conventions governing conduct in war. This video is an unfortunate example of what can happen if the character discipline if the ethos of the United States Marine Corps is not sustained or neglected altogether.

Marine Corps Ethos on character discipline states that: “By building the character of a Marine, we develop the Marine as a warrior-defender, one who embodies United States Marine Corps core values, and one who is self-disciplined, confident, and capable of making the right decision under any condition from combat to liberty.”<sup>30</sup> The importance of sustainment training across all disciplines - physical, mental and cultural - is necessary to mitigate the behavioral mechanisms - psychological and emotional factors - that contribute to a warrior mindset when Marines must apply “lethal” force in combat. Despite the recognition that sustainment training across all disciplines is a contributing factor in the development of a Marine’s warrior mindset, MCMAP continues to teach sportive techniques, which are not effective when Marines are confronted with “lethal” threats in close combat scenarios. In the next section, the combative martial art known as Guided Chaos will be discussed as an alternate view on training modalities effective in confronting “lethal” threats and the development of a warrior mindset.

### **Guided Chaos as an Alternate View on Warrior Mindset Development**

The principles and training modality of Guided Chaos is a unique martial arts example to achieve the warrior mindset of “lethality” currently lacking in MCMAP. Guided Chaos is the essence of what people expect to get, but often do not receive when they study a martial art. It is a no-nonsense, reality based, non-sportive combat martial art created in 1978 by former Yonkers

Police Officer and Crime Scene Expert John Perkins. It is unique in that the focus is on principles of body movement dynamics that allow you to adapt and improvise to the ever-changing and chaotic nature of real life and death combat instead of using patterned, often unrealistic, techniques for saving your life. All violence is chaos and any attempt to impose a stylized, patterned, or sportive solution against it will meet with disaster.

Guided Chaos has no forms or set techniques, no prearranged specific responses to a given number of specific attacks, no learn-by-the-numbers choreography that ultimately clog the mind and the reflexes with unnecessary strategic calculations. Guided Chaos is like “the tree,” firmly rooted in principles based on reality, the laws of physics and human physiology.<sup>31</sup>

The Guided Chaos training modality focuses on principles more than techniques. It is what you need, when you need it, where you need it. During a close combat fight for your life, it is virtually impossible to deliver a stylized technique effectively, due to the speed, chaos, viciousness, confusion, and utter terror associated with close combat. The Nervous System simply becomes overloaded with the flood of sensory stimuli. During this moment, you cannot treat your brain like an electronic dictionary of self-defense responses and expect it to select the right “technique” to counter a “matching” attack under extreme duress and help you escape. The brain simply doesn’t work that way. Consequently, if you’ve been programmed by training a specific response to a specific attack, your self-defense will fail if the attack changes in the slightest from the way you’ve trained.<sup>32</sup>

For many people the notion of using force that can seriously injure or possibly cause death can be a little disconcerting. Even the act of applying controlling techniques often involves causing pain to the person you are controlling, and there is no guarantee that you will

not permanently injure them while applying such techniques. This brings to bear another concept that practitioners of Guided Chaos refer as “Ruthless Intent.” This concept is defined and explained in greater detail in the second addition of the book *Attack Proof*, “Ruthless Intent.”<sup>33</sup>

Ruthless Intent is an extension of your will, and is more mental than physical. Providing that you have trained your body in the principles of Guided Chaos, it is totally achievable for the average person. During combat when your life is on the line, you must be able to strike to penetrate people with the moral and emotional will to cut through them. Your intention must be to destroy them, and you must set it in your mind beforehand that no matter what you intend to take them out.<sup>34</sup>

A major flaw of even the most popular systems out there today is that they fail to take into account the fact that even if you develop devastating strikes, no one is going to just let you hit them. In real violent situations, attacks change moment-by-moment. Guided Chaos teaches one to sense these changes and adapt accordingly by providing you a modality of training to develop this from the very beginning.<sup>35</sup>

Most martial arts focus on teaching tools or techniques instead of developing the skills and attributes that would make them work. For example punches, kicks, elbows, knee strikes, and blocks, along with all of the variations of them are tools. If techniques are taught, the method of how to use them is usually based on contrived assumptions of how they can be applied. However, these techniques are often taught under static conditions and not dynamically. In contrast, Guided Chaos adopts a training modality that develops lethal fighting skills and attributes within the body one already has.<sup>36</sup>

There basic principles of Guided Chaos include the following: balance (equilibrium control), looseness (or pliability), sensitivity (kinesthetic touch) and spatial (hand-eye, sub-cortical vision), body unity (proprioception) and spontaneity (anything goes or adaptability). By focusing on principles in their proper context versus a specific technique, they eventually lead to total freedom of action and creativity. Memorized motion as in “if you do that then I’ll do this” is eliminated--as well as the delay it causes. Through proper training in the principles of Guided Chaos you are able to develop the subconscious attributes of total freedom of action and creativity. One of the most critical exercises toward developing this is “Contact Flow,” which is designed towards developing spontaneous adaptive movement.<sup>37</sup>

Contact Flow (as opposed to Wing Chun’s “Chi Sao” which it is often compared to) is a total free flowing exercise which, as described in Attack Proof, is designed to train the mind and body on a subconscious level to develop the feel or “touch” necessary for dealing with another person’s motion. Contact Flow is not a set of preordained patterned movements that only serve to “lock” your mind into one idea or type of movement (brain lock). Nor is it the slap happy standoff movement that some have tried to imitate. Contact Flow is close-in movement with another human being--in many cases in their most intimate personal comfort zone. Unlike other arts that rely on touch for development, Guided Chaos’ Contact Flow has absolutely no prearranged movements or drills. It is an exercise that allows the mind and body to develop an infinite number of possibilities within various body positions throughout one’s movement while dealing with another human being. It is this lack of preordained movements and freedom of action during the exercise that enables people to develop the adaptive qualities necessary for dealing with the ever-changing

nature of a real fight. This is accomplished because the brain is now free to adapt and create on the fly, rather than look for the patterned matching response to a given movement.<sup>38</sup>

The phenomena of applying the principles and skills are similar to driving a car. When driving a car you are thinking of where you are going, along with listening to the radio and five other things you probably shouldn't be doing. When you are first learning to drive, your movements are choppy, you tend to over steer the car and often depress the break and gas pedal too hard. Once you learn the actual "physical act" of driving a car, it becomes totally transparent and subconscious without thought. When you drive you don't think about driving but where you are going. As you maneuver the car when turning the wheel, you don't turn the wheel all the way, but just enough to negotiate the turn. This is probably the best description of what it is like when moving and striking regardless of speed when applying principles of Guided Chaos. Through Guided Chaos training, you are able to harness these lethal qualities and focus them with little or no thought.<sup>39</sup>

Since the principles of Guided Chaos are rooted in physics and human physiology, they are universal and always present. The principles are available to anyone to develop, provided they're willing to put the time in to work. The key path toward developing the principles is through training, but even this must be done with the proper mindset. Over time one begins to develop a natural, relaxed way of moving. Each movement is fluid and free flowing, so while it may not look pretty, it is often more efficient and powerful than the flashy cool looking stuff. Cool will get you killed. This is because the natural movement that is emphasized within the art is seamless and fluid, whereas structured movement, as taught in many arts, is stiff, choppy and predictable.<sup>40</sup>

Through the development of the principles, of Guided Chaos, one is able to do whatever he needs to do when he needs to do it. Natural movement comes from “The Void” of limitless possibilities. The more natural and coordinated the movement, the more likely it will work. The more structured or unnatural the movement, the less likely it will work. Structured techniques place limitations on movement, making the techniques unsuitable in an environment where the movement dynamics are virtually limitless.<sup>41</sup>

### **Future Suggestions**

The true essence of combat is rooted in the killing of people, not in breaking boards, doing splits, winning trophies or tournaments, doing forms, looking cool or obtaining rank. The true essence of combat lies in killing in the most efficient manner. This concept is non-negotiable. There are certain “violence triggers” that can be set off, and once tripped; it is very hard to pull back the actions. Once a person gets over initial kills, it is often hard to get him to stop unless mitigated by a thorough process for sustainment training and integration across all disciplines – physical, mental and character.

Understand that there is a difference between sportive or sport fighting and real combative arts. Many people continue to confuse fitness for fighting or better yet “substitute” fitness for toughness because it's easier. The point is being a warrior is a matter of mind and spirit, in real martial arts the goal is the survival of yourself and the ultimate destruction of your enemy. There should be absolutely no ambiguity about this.<sup>42</sup>

No one will argue against continuing to develop a Marines’ mental and character attributes to make them a more proficient war fighter. Certainly, free sparring develops and enhances combative performance by introducing Marines to interpersonal violence. The Marine Corps

must remember to maintain the proper mental and character focus when training. However, the Marine Corps must guard against “play fighting” or sports fighting technique-training methodologies. When the time comes to kill, the Marine Corps must make sure it does not have too large of a gap to cross between the training and the forensic reality of the actual engagement.

### **Conclusion**

Much of the martial arts training involve reprogramming the mind, as well as the body. This obviously goes beyond gaining a merely intellectual understanding of the principles behind the doctrine. Guided Chaos asserts that martial arts training methodologies should focus on learning, practicing principles and exercises that help one become a master of motion, randomness, spontaneity, improvisation, and change rather than the master of choreographed sportive techniques. Principles of movement include any and everything within the laws of physics to include balance, ballistics, body unity, inertia, momentum, speed, weight, looseness and sensitivity of the human body in mortal combat.

Sun Tzu stated it best, “Now an army may be likened to water, for just as flowing water avoids the heights and hastens to the lowlands, so an army avoids strength and strikes weakness. And as water shapes its flow in accordance with the ground, so an army manages its victory in accordance with the situation of the enemy. And as water has no constant form, there are in war no constant conditions. Thus, one able to gain the victory by modifying his tactics in accordance with the enemy situation may be said to be divine.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles C. Krulak, (1999). “The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War,” *Marines Magazine*, January 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Brinkley, Mark, C. “A Kick for the Corps,” *Marine Times* 18 June 2001: 18.

<sup>3</sup> Bristol, George H. “Integrated Fighting System – The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program.” *Marine Corps Gazette* July 2001: 38, 39.

<sup>4</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps. Subject: MCO 1500.59 Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, 15 November 2010.

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Martial Arts Center of Excellence. Structure and History of MCMAP. 19 July 2010. <http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/mace/New%20MAIT%20Resources/MAI/STUDENT%20OUTLINE/MAI0309LP%20Structure%20and%20History%20of%20MCMAP%20STUDENT%20OUTLINE.doc> (Accessed 20 March 2012)

<sup>6</sup> Source: Sgt Grit American Courage. Cpl Wooldridge 3/7 [U]. September 2010. URL: (Sgt Grit American Courage 2010) (Lieutenant Colonel Albert Ridenhour 2012) (John Perkins 2000) (Brinkley, Every Marine a Black Belt? 2000) (A (U. S. Corps, Martial Arts Center of Excellence 2011) (accessed March 20, 2012)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Albert Ridenhour, United States Marine Corps Reserve, interview by the author, 15 February 2012.

<sup>9</sup> John Perkins, Al Ridenhour and Matt Kovsky, Attack Proof: The Ultimate Guide to Personal Protection (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2000), xiii

<sup>10</sup> Ibid,

<sup>11</sup> Ibid,

<sup>12</sup> Ibid,

<sup>13</sup> Brinkley, Mark, C. "Every Marine a Black Belt?" Marine Times May 2000: 18

<sup>14</sup> Bristol, George H. "Integrated Fighting System – The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program." Marine Corps Gazette July 2001: 38, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Source: Martial Arts Center of Excellence. Structure and History of MCMAP. 19 July 2010. <http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/mace/New%20MAIT%20Resources/MAI/STUDENT%20OUTLINE/MAI0309LP%20Structure%20and%20History%20of%20MCMAP%20STUDENT%20OUTLINE.doc> (Accessed 20 March 2012)

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Source: Martial Arts Center of Excellence. Human Dimensions of Combat. 6 June 2011.  
<http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/Mace/New%20MAIT%20Resources/MAI/STUDENT%20OUTLINE/MAIB1055%20Human%20Dimensions%20of%20Combat.doc>  
(Accessed 20 March 2012)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Source: Martial Arts Center of Excellence. Structure and History of MCMAP. 19 July 2010.  
<http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/mace/New%20MAIT%20Resources/MAI/STUDENT%20OUTLINE/MAI0309LP%20Structure%20and%20History%20of%20MCMAP%20STUDENT%20OUTLINE.doc> (Accessed 20 March 2012)

<sup>31</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Albert Ridenhour, United States Marine Corps Reserve, interview by the author, 15 February 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> John Perkins, Al Ridenhour and Matt Kovsky, *Attack Proof: The Ultimate Guide to Personal Protection* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2000), 251

<sup>43</sup> Roger Ames, *Sun Tzu: The Art of Warfare* (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1993), 103.

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